

March 15, 2018

## **ERIE COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS – Special Meeting**

Chairman Horton called to order a Special Meeting of the Erie County Board of Elections at 5:15 p.m. in the Erie County Council Caucus Room, 114A, of the Erie County Courthouse.

Mr. Smith then called the roll:

Members Present:     Mr. Anderson  
                               Mr. Horton  
                               Mrs. Loll  
                               Mr. Rastetter

Members Absent:     Dr. Foust  
                               Mrs. Fatica  
                               Mr. Leone

Also Present:           Douglas R. Smith, Clerk of Elections

### **3.     Hearing of the Public:**

Present: Hugh McCartney, Anna McCartney, Cindy Purvis

Mr. Horton and Mr. Anderson spoke briefly about the meeting being a free flowing conversation rather than the typical one-sided nature of “public speakers” at meetings. Therefore, the minutes will reflect the dynamics of a group discussion.

Ms. Purvis asked the Election Board to consider switching over to paper ballots in time for the November election. She provided the Board with an article by John Cuneo about Barbara Simons, a computer scientist who believes in paper ballots rather than computerized voting. Purvis made the point that the Governor’s mandate did not disallow counties using paper ballots in their election. Ms. Purvis disagreed with a previous contention by Mr. Horton that a hand count would be too long and too expensive so long as it was properly staffed. That ultimately people would be more trusting of the outcome than they are now. Purvis also stated that the County is unable to do a true recount using the current system.

Mr. Horton reiterated that he was elected during a recount of votes for his Council seat. He also spoke about the excess time and manpower that was

March 15, 2018

needed for a hand count several years prior in Corry. That it was very difficult, even though it was only 5,000 votes and extrapolating the process to the entire County would lead to excessive timeframes and confusion of voters. Mr. Horton also reminded the attendees that the County was in no way mandated to make any changes for the current election cycle.

Mr. McCartney spoke next and asked for information about how the change to the current system occurred and why paper wasn't considered more seriously at that time. He reiterated the warnings put forth years before about the unreliability of computerized voting. McCartney mentioned the scandal involving Diebold voting systems. That their code was compromised and their ownership was questionable. He also stated that the County's current voting machine vendor was owned by a holding company in Kansas.

Mrs. Loll, who was the only Board member present during the original changeover in equipment in 2006, spoke briefly about the period. She stated that the Federal government was unhappy about the mechanical machines in use and that the State mandated a changeover to a different system that was ADA compliant. All the ADA compliant equipment utilized computerized system.

Mr. McCartney stated that he had called the Secretary of State's office and had been told that Erie County could utilize paper if they desired. He felt this was important to consider because of the vulnerabilities of our current voting system. He mentioned several methods which could be found on the internet that reportedly could take a touch screen voting machine out of service.

Mr. Horton reminded those present that the Governor stated in his Executive Order that the current systems in the State were very safe and reliable.

Mr. Anderson reiterated his support for the open discussion that was taking place at the meeting and asked Mr. Smith to talk briefly about the history of the ES&S system and Erie County elections. Anderson asked if Erie had ever used Diebold equipment and if there had ever been a major discrepancy in Erie elections. Mr. Smith answered "no" to each.

Mr. Anderson suggested that any if the attendees or anyone they knew had questions about the County's voting system, what might happen in the future, they should talk to Mr. Smith.

March 15, 2018

Mr. Smith spoke briefly about the history of the 2006 changeover in equipment; what was involved and what had been done to assist the electorate in making the transition.

Mr. Anderson then stated that it was his intent to make it clear to the electorate that Erie County's system worked properly but that it was nearing the end of its useful life. Knowing that, he wanted the Board to be proactive in looking at the next generation of equipment, equipment which would be reliable and evoke confidence among county citizens. He stated his wish that the Election Board begin doing research into new systems and have open discussions involving the public so that all could be part of the process. He thanked Chairman Horton for calling the meeting and for being part of the solution.

Mr. Horton then spoke and asked those in attendance what it was they wanted the Board to do.

Mr. McCartney responded that he wanted the Board to ask the Secretary of State if the County could vote by mail.

Anna McCartney responded that she wanted the County to utilize paper ballots only, further stating that savings could be realized in paying people to count the ballots rather than sending the money out of the county to some voting system company.

Ms. Purvis indicated her agreement with Mrs. McCartney.

Mr. Anderson stated that the Board was bound by State law and that no changes could be made to voting systems or procedures which did not comport with election statutes. He also told the group that the County Commissioners of Pennsylvania had been pushing the State to enact no fault absentee voting. That would allow anyone to vote on a paper ballot if they so desired.

Mr. Rastetter then pointed out that any changes to the Election Code must be pursued through the State Assembly.

Mr. Horton then thanked all in attendance for their participation. He restated the County's intention to use the current equipment until the end of its useful life. He further indicated the likely use of paper in the next system purchased by the County.

March 15, 2018

5. **Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting:**

The minutes were not voted on due to the lateness of the hour. They will be voted on at the next meeting.

6. **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Deneé M. Breter, Council Secretary